

*The Blessedness of them that die
in the Faith and Work of
their Lord.*

132.
A
S E R M O N

Occasion'd by the
D E A T H
Of the late Reverend
Mr. James Coningham, A. M.
Preach'd to
His Affectionate Afflicted People,
September 9th, 1716.

By S. WRIGHT. *W*

*We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels; that the
Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not
of us. 2 Cor. iv. 7.*

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L O N D O N:

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REVELATION XIV. 13.

And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write ; Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours ; and their Works do follow them.

THE last Sight that I had of my Dear Friend and Brother, in whose Place I now stand, made such Impressions upon me, as render'd it more than ordinarily difficult to prepare for this Day's Service.

Infomuch, that after I had undertaken it, I found it very hard to set about it ; till, thinking one Way and another, this Passage very seasonably occur'd to my mind : A certain *General* of an *Army* consulting with one of his *Officers* about the Disposal of his Men, in a Battel which was resolv'd upon ; a Cannon Ball came, as they were talking together, and dash'd to pieces the Head of the *Officer*, as he stood by his *General's* Side. Upon which, like a truly Great Man, the General turns to those that were behind him, with these Words : *Lord have Mercy upon his Soul, he's kill'd ; but come we must go on.*

In like manner (I thought with my self) those that will approve themselves good *Soldiers* of *JESUS CHRIST*, must go on with the Work and Warfare

that he has appointed; tho' such as they might be taking Counsel with, and might hope to receive great Help and Assistance from, are struck dead at their Side. Upon which I immediately fix'd my Thoughts on the Words read, and shall endeavour to discourse on them as profitably as I can.

There are two very distinct Views, with which Men are lead to read and study this Book of the *Revelation*. Some are taken up with the Prophetick Discoveries of what shall happen to the Church and People of God in *this* World, till they have quite lost themselves in the View and Expectation of Things *Temporal*: Whilst others have accounted it the truest Wisdom to enlarge their Thoughts most on what might serve to make 'em Holy and Heavenly, and give them the most affecting Views of things *Spiritual* and *Eternal*. These last are in no danger of bringing Disorders into States and Kingdoms, of procuring Shame and Confusion to themselves, or of leading their Friends and Acquaintance into Snares and Disappointments, as the other have done. And yet I believe that they are vastly before the other too in discerning of the Times; and have much more just Apprehensions of the Nature of Christ's *Earthly*, as well as brighter Displays of the Glory of his *Heavenly* Kingdom.

So that those things which are least dubious, and may most serve the common Purposes of Religion, ought in the first Place to be considered by us. And the other things, which are dark and mysterious, should be look'd into, as we have Opportunity, Capacity, and proper Helps, only in a Subserviency to the establishing what is more certain, and of principal Importance.

Thus, for Example, to know that there is a *Blessedness after Death* reserv'd for those who die in the Faith, and for the Testimony of *JESUS*; is much more important than to know who or what is meant by

by the *Second Beast*, with whom Christ should maintain a Controversy, and who were the Persons that should die during this Contest, in a faithful Adherence to the Cause and Interest of the Lamb.

For whether we can fix this last Point to Satisfaction or not ; (as I find Expositors are very far from agreeing about it) yet the former is sufficiently evident : Those who die Witnesses to the Truth, and Efficacy, and Purity of the Gospel ; struggling with the Powers that would oppose or corrupt it ; they shall be *blest*, even when *dead* ; for they shall rest from their Labours, and their Works shall follow them.

But I confess my self very inclinable to fall in with them, who explain the Verse before this concerning the Persecutions after the Reformation from Popery was begun : *Here truly is the Patience of the Saints*, [as the Occasions, which have try'd that Patience, were, and are very great.] *Here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus* ; [giving the fullest Proof of their Sincerity in the Profession of Religion.]

It may therefore particularly be apply'd to the Consolation of such, *I heard a Voice from Heaven*, [a most certain Voice] *saying unto me, Write* [let it be a Matter carefully recorded and handed down to those who may think themselves forgotten, or neglected in the Calamities of after-Times] " That al-
 " tho' they may not live to see the Destruction of
 " the Church's Enemies ; but may die as it were in
 " the Struggle with them, and in the believing Ex-
 " pectation only of what Christ is about to do ; yet
Blessed are the Dead, who, thus, die in the Lord :
 [And that notwithstanding all the *Anathema's* of my-
 stical *Babylon*, or her Adherents,] *from henceforth*,
 [from the Time of recording this ; or from the Time
 when such Persecutions (just mention'd) began ; or
 from the Time of their Death, let all them that die
 in *Jesus* be esteemed *Blessed*.] *Yea, saith the Spirit* ['tis
 a Truth

a Truth confirmed by that Testimony which is infal-
 lible, let the World say or think what it will] *that*
they may rest from their Labours, [their Toils and their
 Tryals] *and their Works do follow them*. [The Me-
 mory of 'em remains both on Earth and in Heaven ;
 and the Reward of them shall accompany them into
 the other World, and shall follow them to endless
 Ages.]

The Words thus paraphras'd may farther be en-
 larged on in the following Observations.

I. *That to be the faithful Servants of Christ, and hear-
 tily concern'd for his Cause and Interest in the World,
 must not be look'd upon as a Security from the Stroke of
 Death.*

Both History and Experience shew us, that this is
 the End of all Flesh ; and the Scripture has told us,
 that it is *appointed of God for Men once to die*.

Nay, we find that some of the most holy, useful,
 exemplary Lives, have been but very short. A Life,
 that above all others was to be desired, for every
 thing that was amiable in it self, and beneficial to the
 World, yet reach'd but to three and thirty Years :
 I mean the Life of our Great Lord and Master him-
 self, *JESUS CHRIST*. So that if his Followers
 should be call'd in the midst of their Days, their
 Hopes, or their Usefulness, to take leave of this
 World, and be seen of it no more ; it is only to be
 conformed in this Particular to their Saviour.

But, to carry this Matter yet farther, it is the very
 Glory of the Christian Faith and Cause to greaten Mens
 Spirits, even to a voluntary shedding of their Blood,
 and a Rejoicing to do so, when they cannot other-
 wise maintain their Integrity, or propagate true Re-
 ligion in the World. And I believe our Text prin-
 cipally speaks of such as thus *die in the Lord* ; be-
 lieving in him, and adhering to him, so as to *lay*
down their Lives in his Cause, and for his sake. In
 such

such Cases, the being faithful Servants of Christ, and heartily concern'd for his Honour, actually exposes to Death, instead of securing from it. To proceed,

Those also that die a *natural Death* in Times when Religion is despised, and the Professors of it born down by the Iniquities and Calamities of the Places where they liv'd ; and notwithstanding such Discouragements, they still *hold fast their Faith and a good Conscience* ; they may be said to *die in the Lord*, according to the Import of this Text. And this Character will not any more secure from a natural Death in the Course of Providence, than from the Fury and Violence of wicked Men.

CHRIST did not undertake to discharge his Followers of that Debt which they owe to Nature, and to the Frame and Constitution of this material World ; but to discharge them from all that Debt to Divine Justice, which would have made them miserable for ever ; and which gave to natural Death its Terrors, and its Sting.

And if any are taken away in the *midst of their Usefulness*, 'tis to their *own* manifest Advantage.

To die in the full Esteem of their Friends, will make their Memory the more precious : And to be found *so doing* when their Lord comes, will make their after Reward very glorious : A Reward that shall extend not only to what they have actually done for Christ, but to all that they sincerely intended to do for him.

Yea, sometimes the Death of useful Persons is made to serve some great and kind Purposes to *others* ; insomuch that their Deaths may prove more useful than their Lives could have done. And then withall, God will have us to know, that the most useful Lives are in his hands ; and that he can raise up Instruments for himself, or lay them by, when, and where, and as He pleases.

Beside,

Beside; Death is *necessary* to the compleat Holiness and Happiness of the very best of Men. Nothing less than such a Change could effectually destroy Sin in us. But God has so wisely ordered it, that Sin, which has brought forth a many Evils to afflict Men, has been the Parent of one thing that will prove its own Destruction, and that is *Death*. By which we are freed from the very Remains of Sin, and from every Disposition to it.

Upon the whole, the Death of such as belong to *CHRIST* is so far from reflecting any Dishonour upon Religion, that it often proves the Language even of the worst and greatest Enemies to Good Men; *Let us die the Death of the Righteous, and let our latter End be like his.* For,

II. *There is a Blessedness pronounc'd upon such after Death, Blessed are the Dead*; not only they shall be, but they are Blessed, even as soon as dead.

Their Souls don't lie in a State of *Insensibility*; for that can by no means be called a State of Blessedness. Much less can they be supposed to go into any such Place as *Purgatory*; for that is instead of being blessed, to be tormented. But they go to be present with their Lord; and to be present with him in such a Manner, that the nearest and most comfortable Services and Approaches to him in this World, are a comparative *Absence* from him. For whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord; as St. Paul speaks, who yet had more of a Divine Presence than ordinary Christians can hope to enjoy. And for all that, as soon as his Spirit should leave the Body, or (to keep to his Phrase) be absent from it; then should there be such Knowledge of GOD, and such Communications from him, as in this embodied State an Apostle was not capable of. Whereas if the Soul was either suffering or sleeping, it would be more absent from God than when it is now serving

serving him, even in an ordinary way, supposing it be but with the common Tokens of his Favour and Acceptance.

There is indeed a critical Explication of the Word ἀπαύρι, *from henceforth*, that makes Death, as a meer Privation of Life, to be a Blessing. Reading the Text thus, *From henceforth Blessed are the Dead*; some have thought, that considering the extreme Tryals and Cruelties, to which the last severe Persecution, spoken of in the Context, would expose the sincere Christian; it would even be a Blessing to be dead betwixt the Time of writing this, and the Accomplishment of the Things written. With a like View of the Oppressions that were under the Sun, Solomon says, that he praised the Dead which were already dead, more than the living which were yet alive, Eccles. iv. 2.

And here, indeed, it might be allowed, that to have *no Being*, or no Sense at all, is better than to be in *extreme Misery*; but it is not enough to make a Person *Blessed*: That necessarily supposes Existence, and such a kind of Existence, as shall render capable of Pleasure and Satisfaction. Good Men are sometimes taken away from the *Evil to come*, and 'tis well for them that they are so; but if that was all their Blessedness, there had been no Reason to speak in a distinguishing Way, of *the Dead that die in the Lord*; for this would have been the Happiness even of *Hypocrites*, and *others*, that did not die in the Lord, as well as of them who did. All that were in their Graves would be freed from the Miseries of this Life, as well as those that died in the Lord. Nor will it at all comport with the Expression here, to say, that they shall be perfectly happy at the Resurrection; for the Words run, *Blessed are the Dead*: And then the latter Part of this Verse adds, not only that they rest from their *Labours*, but that their *Works do follow*

them, or rather *accompany* them during that State of Rest, into the other World.

A. Bp. Tillotson, I know, has chosen to fall in with the critical Reading I have mention'd, but with a very different View to that which I have been arguing against: However I am not able, in this Point, to subject my self so far, either to his Authority, or (what was much more a Glory to that Great Man) his Reasoning, as to think in the same Way with him concerning this Passage of Scripture. For, to me, it seems much more likely, that this Text was written for the *Encouragement* of those who should *die* in the Struggles betwixt the Followers of the *Beast*, and the Followers of the *Lamb*; than that it should be intended to suggest any thing which would *aggravate* the suffering Christians Misery: As it must do, to tell 'em, that it had been better to be dead *before*, than to go *thro'* such Tryals. St. James seems to have been of a very different Spirit from this, when he says, *My Brethren, count it all Joy, when ye fall into divers Temptations*, James i. 2.

And had St. John here written with the same View that Solomon did in the Place before quoted, there would have been no need to preface what he says, as he has done, *I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write*; nor to bring in such an express Testimony of the *Spirit*, to gain a Belief of what is here recorded. Every one at the first Mention would believe it without all this, That they who *die in the Lord*, and go to him before some grievous Calamity overtake them, are happy in making such an Escape to Heaven. But now when Antichristian Powers rage, and the hop'd for Blessings of Christ's Kingdom are delayed, then it appears highly requisite, that good Men should have the strongest Consolation which can be afforded them: Therefore let me add this further Observation,

III. *That*

III. *That the Blessedness of them, who at such Times die in the Lord, is a Thing most certain, and fully attested.*

This is declared, not by the Voice of Man, such a Voice as mine, for that you might despise or disbelieve; but by a Voice from Heaven, which cannot lie or deceive. And this Voice commands what was uttered to be written: A Command that no where else occurs, but in the Beginning of this Prophecy; thereby shewing both the Truth and Excellency of what is contained in these Words: And that they might be convey'd down to future Ages, as a perpetual Consolation to them that should die for the Cause, or in the Faith of JESUS.

But then besides that, the Spirit that inwardly guided and inspired our Apostle, as well as the Voice that outwardly spoke to him, confirms this. *Yea, saith the Spirit; I give in my Testimony to this Truth, and I'll maintain it against all the Opposition that shall be raised to it in the World, That such as die in the Lord are Blessed.*

Now the Reason of so fully ascertaining this Truth, is, that it might be rely'd upon, even in Times of the greatest Tryal and Temptation. Such I take our own Times in some Respects to be: For such is the Case of all those, who are now struggling for Scripture Religion, and Primitive Christianity (I care for no Man's Displeasure upon my speaking it) that this Text may be particularly applied, even to many that are now deceased from among our selves. Those will be found, (I doubt not) to be bless'd with the Blessedness of them that die in the Lord, who were earnestly endeavouring to serve the Cause of our common Christianity, tho' they did not suffer Martyrdom for so doing.

Sometimes we have to do with *Mockers*, that would represent our *Preaching* as *vain*, and your *Faith* as

vain, and that would have us to think, *all those that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.* Therefore in opposition to these, we have so much Assurance, that they who die in the Lord are Blessed.

Sometimes we are *solemnly damn'd* by those who are lording it over the Faith and Consciences of Men. We are represented as not fit to have what they call Christian Burial, and much less to enter into the Christian's Happiness. Now for Confutation of the furious Opinions and Judgments of these tyrannizing Men, it is here recorded, that those who die in the Faith of Christ, and are really concerned for his Cause and Interest in the World, are and shall be blessed, in spite of all those that reproach and condemn them. And I am perswaded, that if we could once gain a Firmness of Mind to despise their *Anathema's* in *this* World, they will do us no Hurt in the *next*. Let us maintain an assured Belief, that those who die in the Faith of their Bibles, and contending for the things contained there, are blessed; and we need not value either the Curses of *Rome*, or of those who are guided by the same Antichristian Spirit and Fury.

The Voice from Heaven does not say, Blessed are the Dead, that die out of this or the other *Party*, or that die under such a distinguishing *Denomination* of Christians; but Blessed are the Dead, that *die in the Lord*: And when the Spirit of Christ and of the Gospel says, *Yea*, I am sorry that the Spirit of any particular Church, or of any Party of professed Christians, should say, *Nay*; and should teach Men to fall a cursing those whom GOD has blessed.

However this is our Comfort, that the Blessedness of them who die in the Lord, does not depend upon the Will or Opinions of Men, but stands most fully attested from *Heaven*, and is confirm'd by the Testimony of an *infallible Spirit*. And then 'tis a further Comfort to think,

IV. *That the Blessedness of such as die in the Lord consists in an entire Rest from all their present Labours and Hardships.* Our Text speaks only of *resting from their Labours*; but the original Word is sometimes used to signify Cares, Afflictions, and Temptations, as well as Work and Business. So when our Saviour says, *Come unto me all ye that labour*, the antient Greek Writers tell us, particularly St. Chrysostom *, that this is meant of all such as were vexed with Sins, Cares and Griefs, or Perplexities of Mind. And 'tis certain, that those who go to JESUS, now he is in Heaven, will there find *perfect Rest* from all these.

It may be said of *every true Christian*, when he dies, that he rests from his Labours; that is, from the Labours both of *Body* and *Mind*, as far as these were grievous and burdensome to him. He has no more *inward Distresses*, and Disorders of his Spirit, to struggle with; no mistaken Apprehensions, irregular Affections, or domineering Passions, to create Difficulties to him. He has no more *bodily Inconveniencies* or *Pains*; neither the Labours of Mortification, or Affliction to go thorough. He has no more *Enemies* or *Oppositions* to conflict with: Nor any *Duty*, that shall be so circumstanc'd as to become a *Task* to him, any more to perform. *God shall then wipe away all Tears from our Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain: for the former things are past away.*

But it may be said yet more emphatically of *those that die in suffering or calamitous Times*, that they rest from their Labours. From all those Reproaches and Revilings, that made it so hard to keep up their Resolutions for God, and to hold on in the Way of their Duty. And what Mind, where there is any real

* Homil. XXXIX. secundum Editionem Commel.

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Greatness, but must feel an Uneasiness not to be described, in being continually subject to malicious Insults, and, as the Apostle expresses it, to *cruel Mockings*? 'Tis true, Grace will teach us in some measure to get above these, but it does not teach us to be insensible of them. To be wholly at rest, we must be out of the reach of them, that is, in Heaven.

The same might be said of all the other Instances of Hatred and Persecution, that a good Man here meets with; they that die in the LORD are at rest from them. *There the Wicked cease from troubling, there the Weary are at rest.* And indeed the greater their Exercises and Sufferings were, the sweeter their Rest will be.

But then, this may also in a peculiar Sense be applied to the *Ministers of CHRIST* and the *Gospel*, (if faithful) that they rest from their Labours at Death. Namely, from all those Labours that are occasion'd by the *Wickedness of the World*; and the Enmity which there is to serious Godliness and Religion: The Pains they have taken to convince and convert Sinners, and to maintain their own Faith and Piety against all the Assaults of an impious infidel Generation, will then be at an End; and, whether they have been instrumental to save others, or not, yet they shall be accepted in *CHRIST JESUS*.

Further, they shall rest from those Labours that are occasion'd by the *Miseries of the World*, and the melancholy afflicted State of the People of God. How many Cases are there, in which we now find it exceeding hard to acquit our selves aright? To reduce those that are wandering, to establish those that are wavering, to direct those that are doubting, to comfort those that are mourning, to teach Submission to those that are suffering, and the like; how great is the Labour and Pains of all this? But when a Minister comes to die in the Lord, he goes to a
World,

World where there are no Temptations, Weaknesses, or Sorrows, and therefore none of these kind of Labours remain to him.

How great Labour is necessary in faithful Ministers to oppose the Designs and Attempts of the *Spirits of Darkness*? who are continually tempting them from their Work, hindering them in it, or raising Discouragements, which they find it very difficult to surmount. But in the World above there is no Tempter.

How great is the Labour that we sometimes have with our *own Spirits* and Tempers, to get 'em into a right Frame for the Services to which we are call'd? But hereafter we shall serve God as Angels do.

How great is our Labour also with the *Spirits* and *Tempers of our stated Hearers*, to keep up any thing of a lively Sense of Religion in their Breasts? I have often thought of that plain Comparison made use of by one of our first Reformers, to this purpose: "The Work of a Minister is harder than that of a Carpenter: For a Carpenter, if he has a Piece of rough Timber to hew or carve into any particular Form, or Figure, he can do a Part of his Work one Day, and leave the other Part to another, and knows that he shall find it as he left it, and so can go on till he has compleated it: But a Minister, if he makes some good Impressions upon the Souls of his Hearers one Day, seldom meets with them in the same good Disposition the Day after: Either the Cares, or Pleasures, of the World have undone all, and he has his Work to go over again from one Week to another, without being able to discern, that he makes any considerable Progress. Happy are they, who having finish'd their Course, and gain'd the Approbation of their Lord, are now got to their Rest.

Besides, there are often those *Distempers and Infirmities* attending us, that very much aggravate the Labours before mention'd. And a great deal of Oppo-

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Opposition from the World a faithful Minister meets with, that ordinary Christians are not exposed to. It is hard even to stand our Ground in an Age that is ignorant, corrupt, and swell'd with Perverseness, as the present Age is. Certainly one very great Part of the Blessedness of those who die in the Lord, is this, that *they rest from their Labours*. But this is not all.

V. *Those that die in the Lord have a Blessedness arising from the Works which follow them.* They are not only freed from all that was painful and evil in their Lives here; but they carry along with them, and reap the Benefit of all the Good which they did in this present World. *Their Works shall follow or accompany them.*

Some Works, which here they were employ'd in, shall still continue after Death. Those Exercises of Worship and Devotion, which afforded them the truest Pleasure and Satisfaction on Earth, will be attended to and performed in the most raised and perfect Manner in Heaven. There indeed they have no need of *Sacramental Representations and Shadows*: for in Heaven they see a Redeemer *Face to Face*, and know as they are known: Nor will those Parts of Worship be continu'd, which arise from our present Sins, Wants or Fears: But all those Exercises of Devotion, which may express our Love, Joy, Praise, and intire Obedience to the Will of God, these abide after Death. And the more any Soul was wrap'd up in holy Contemplations, and Admiration of the Perfections and the Works of God, and of a Redeemer, whilst here below; the easier will it be to join in with those who are employ'd in the same manner above.

Again, there are other Works which accompany them that die in the Lord, only as they will afford Matter of *comfortable Reflection* in the other World. These Labours and Sufferings, which shall cease, yet shall

shall be remembred in Heaven. Remembred, not so as to give any trouble, or to renew the uneasie Thoughts which here they might occasion; but so as to yield a very high Satisfaction, that we were enabled to go *thro' them*; and so as to give a double Relish to our Happiness, when we shall see our selves plac'd *above them*. Difficult and painful Enterprizes, are commonly observ'd to afford great Pleasure upon a Review; whilst Things of a more pleasing Nature for the Present, become insignificant and dull in the Remembrance. I doubt not, but St. Paul has now a more triumphant Joy in looking back to his Sufferings, than in reflecting upon a former Transport, when He was *caught up into Paradise*. And then to think, that all those Toils and Tryals are *over*; and, like one that is just landed after a dangerous and troublesome Voyage, to stand on the Shore and review the Rocks and Sands, and Dangers he has escap'd; how must this encrease the Happiness of such as are got safe into the other World? These are Thoughts which may properly arise from the Works of good Men, being said to follow 'em after Death.

But what seems to be principally intended by this Expression, is, that the *Reward of their Works*, shall accompany or follow them. So when our Saviour would encourage his Disciples against such as should persecute them, and say *all manner of Evil against 'em falsely for his sake*, he tells them, that *great is your Reward in Heaven*, Math. v. 12, And in Math. xvi. 27. 'tis expressly said, that the Son of Man shall come in the Glory of his Father with his Angels; and then he shall reward every Man according to his Works. Not that any Man's Works can put in a meritorious Claim to a future blessed Reward; but that infinite Grace and Mercy is pleas'd to set such a Value upon them. The best way of explaining this Passage of Scripture,

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is to turn you to that other in the close of the xxv. Chap. of St. *Math.* where you find Works of Piety and Charity are recorded in the Court of Heaven, shall be mention'd with Applause at the Day of Judgment, and shall be rewarded with Eternal Life.

And indeed, whatever now is esteem'd the Reward of great and good Actions, we find promised to Works of Piety hereafter. Applause; *Well done, good and faithful Servant.* Advancement; *I will make thee Ruler over many Things.* High Delights and Pleasures; *Enter into the Joy of thy Lord.* A being enrich'd with an inexhaustible Treasure; therefore says our LORD, *I will give you a Kingdom*; and in another Place, to shew, how vast an Inheritance that Kingdom is, 'tis said, *He that overcometh shall inherit all Things*, Rev. xxi. 7. In these and the like Instances, the Works of good Men do follow them after Death: But we shall never know what is the full Reward of these, till we come to the full Enjoyment of it. 'Tis enough, that we are assured of all that a God can give, and we can desire, and that to Eternity.

Suffer me now to draw some Inferences from what has been said.

1. *How different is the Scripture account, and the World's account of Blessedness.* The World counts those only blessed, who flow in Riches, and the Glory of whose House is increased: Who are invested with Power and Authority, and who are above the common Afflictions and Cares of Life: But the Scripture blesses those that are *poor in Spirit*, that are *Meek*, and *Mourning*, and *Persecuted*, and *Reviled*; and at last (to the Confusion of all the Schemes and Imaginations of the Worldling) *Blessed are the Dead,*

Dead, &c. Now think we seriously with our selves, from which of these it is fit to take our Notions of *Blessedness*: And then let us seek after it accordingly.

2. We may take occasion from this Text, to mark the difference betwixt the Death of the Righteous and the Wicked. 'Tis a Remark of Dr. Tillotson's, " That when pious Souls go out of this World, they leave all the Evils of the World behind them; but carry along with them all the Good they have done to reap there the Comfort and Reward of it. Just as on the other Hand, Wicked Men when they die leave all the good Things of this World, the Pleasures and Enjoyments behind them; but the Guilt and Remorse of their wicked Lives accompany them, and stick close to them to Torment them there, and that there they may be tormented for them.

3. If they are blessed that *die in the Lord*, then let us take care that we be the Lord's. That we believe in Jesus with a Faith unfeigned; that we surrender our selves to him; and that we do all we can to promote his Honour and Glory in the World. We must first be united to Him, and must have the same Mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus, or we cannot at last die in him. It is in vain for any to Hope, that they shall be his Dying, if they are not his Living. And those are weak, ignorant People, that wou'd have us to say they *die in the Lord*, when we could not perswade them to *live to him*. The Apostle Paul teaches us to keep these two together; (and woe to those absolving Priests, that pretend to separate them) *Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.* Rom. xiv. 8.

4. If they are blessed that die in the Lord, *then let this engage all good Men to hold fast their Integrity, even till they die.* Let us set the Testimony of Heaven, and of the Spirit of GOD, against all the Profaneness, and Virulence of Men: And if at any Time, we should find our selves discourag'd in our Work and Duty, or dishearten'd in our Hopes and Expectations, let us think of them, who once were struggling with Difficulties as we now are, but thro' Faith and Patience have conquered, and are gone to inherit the Promises. For *our* sakes as well as *theirs*, these Words were commanded to be written. And therefore,

5. Let the *Thought of Resting, comfort us in our Labours, and make us willing to go thro' them.* If we were call'd out to the hardest Services, or to the severest Trials, this were enough to reconcile us to 'em, that they shall continue but a little while, and then we shall be at rest: How much more should this prevail upon us to be easie and resigned, when our Labours, and Sorrows are comparatively so small? We may have our worldly Troubles and Vexations to labour with, and perhaps our spiritual Distresses and Exercises too; but is there no Consolation to think that our Rest is approaching? We may sometimes think our Work very hard, through our own Deadness and Dispiritedness; and it may still be made harder through the Temptations and Oppositions we meet with; but do's it give no Spring to our Resolutions and Endeavours, to hear a Voice from Heaven assure us, that if we hold on a little longer, we shall rest from our Labours? Surely, *Whatever our Hand finds to do, for God, for the Good of others, or for our own Salvation, we should do it with all our might; both because there is no work, nor device in the Grave,* and

and because we are assured of *resting from all our Labours in Heaven.* Yea,

6. The Consideration of our good Works following us, should make us endeavour after something great and exemplary in the Service of God. How much have Persons been animated both to do, and to suffer, only for the perpetuating their Names and Memories in this World? What hazardous Adventures, what bloody Battles, what long Industry, and in some Cases what shocking Deaths, have Men been put upon, by the ambitious Thought of living in History, and having their Names convey'd down to future Ages? *LORD GOD!* What a shame is it to us, that believe the Works of good Men shall be recorded in a way infinitely more to their Honour and Advantage, than worldly Men ever have imagin'd, that we should yet be so every way exceeded and out-done by them in Courage and Resolution.

The greater our Works are, the greater must our Blessedness be by necessary Consequence, since our Works are said to follow us. And if any Man question this, let him make Sense of what the Apostle Paul says, in 2 Cor. ix. 6. if he can; *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully.* Or let him tell us, what can be meant in the Parable of the Talents, by one having Authority over Ten Cities, and another over Five; if there be not a different Regard had, to the different Services and Improvements of good Men in this World. Or let him account for the different Glories of those that are raised from the Dead, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

Lastly, What Reason is there, from the foregoing Discourse, to take Comfort in the Death of our Christian Friends, and particularly of the Ministers of Religion,

on, when they die in the Lord. They are at rest from all their Labours and Infirmities, and Sorrows; and whatever Good you saw in them, or saw done by them, it now contributes to their Blessedness and Joy. Let it not then encrease your Sorrow, to say that you have lost such as were truly pious and useful; *If you loved them you would rejoyce, because they are gone to the Father,* John xiv. 20. And really, if we lov'd *our selves* as we should do, our Thoughts would be more taken up about our own following after them, than about their being gone before us: *I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,* 2 Sam. xii. 23.

You that are now Mourning for a Deceased Husband, or Father, or Friend, should make Application of this. And I am the more concerned that you should do so, because I find the Time will not now allow me to speak more largely and distinctly to you.

I doubt not, but the good Man who is gone from you, had often thought of our Text, and was well perswaded of the Truth of it: And could he now speak to you, he would tell you a great deal more of the Blessedness of the *Dead that die in the Lord*, than I am able to do: But pray let it be seen, that the Scriptures are regarded by you, even as much as one coming from the other World would be; remembering this, that those who believe not *Moses and the Prophets*, neither would they be perswaded tho' *one arose from the Dead.* Luke xvi. 31.

Nay, if you believe the Things that He has already spoken to you, in the Name of the Lord, you will not need any Consolations, or Directions, that I can lay before you. And indeed the Providence of God has so ordered it, that he has left a *Sermon* in Print behind him, upon the Death of Mr. *Chorlton of Manchester*; that shows you, what his Thoughts were

were upon such an occasion as this. The Reason of God's removing useful and desireable Ministers by Death; and the Improvement which you ought to make of such awful Providences; are there so fully considered, that I thought it my Duty to recommend the perusal of that Sermon to you, under your present Circumstances. And since, He himself has made such Provision for you against this melancholy Time, I shall content my self in referring you to what He, being dead, yet speaketh there to you.

I cannot, I believe, say any thing to make his Name, or his past Ministrations more valued by you, than they are already: But if I could, I should be glad to do it; that so every good Word you have heard from him, might have the more lasting Effect upon you.

It must be said of the late Reverend Mr. James Coningham, that he was a Man admirably well fitted for the Work in which he was engaged. His Learning was very considerable; and such as not only qualify'd him for the Office of the Ministry himself, but made him happily instrumental to the educating of others for the same Service. He received the Title of Master of Arts at Edinburgh, where he went through his Academical Studies.

He was first fix'd in the Ministerial Work at Penreth in Cumberland, where it pleased GOD, among other Seals to his Ministry, to render him very useful to one, now an Inhabitant in this City, and joyn'd to this Congregation. At Penreth He continued six Years, and there begun the Work of a Tutor to young Men.

From this Place, He remov'd to Manchester in Lancashire; where he was joyn'd with Mr. Chorlton as a Co-Pastor in the Work of the Ministry; and where he still went on to direct and assist young Students

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dents both in their Philosophical and Theological Studies; as Mr. Chorlton also did. Thus for five Years Mr. Coningham liv'd very comfortably; till the Death of Mr. Chorlton: After which he met with those Uneasinesses, that very much broke and sunk his Spirits. He remain'd however, at Manchester above six Years struggling with a variety of Difficulties: and was observ'd to lose much of his natural Strength and Vigour, thro' the Troubles he there met with. He was prosecuted for the instruction of Youth; and had a great many Enemies to the Interest of the Dissenters in general, to maintain his Ground against: But these could not have done him that Injury which the Divisions and Disorders among his own People did. I wish all those who occasion Disturbances and Breaches in Congregations, would lay to Heart, among other Things, such a Consideration as this!

It pleased God to favour, and own Mr. Coningham, in his being called from that uneasy Station, to this Place: Where he has met with so much of a contrary Temper and Spirit, as made him account it something of an amends for his past Troubles; and render'd this Congregation very dear to him. The Years of his Ministry here have been but few; Alas! might Sorrow speak, too few. He saw the Good Pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hand: He saw some that were Young coming in to accept of the Gospel Offers: And he saw you that were Elder provoking one another to Love and to Good Works: And all of you seem'd willing to rejoice in his Light: When, behold, of a sudden it is obscured. He is not, for God has taken him. Four Years have finish'd his Work in this Place.

It must be owned that he has had his Afflictions as well as Mercies since his coming to London. For God does wisely set Prosperity and Adversity over

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over against the other. He has buried three Children in so small a Compass of Time ; and was very much afflicted by the Illness and broken Bone of another ; and now was lately seiz'd with a mortal Distemper himself : Yet in all this he did not repine, or charge God foolishly. He knew how to give up what was dearest to him ; and has now given up his own Soul into the Hands of God. And he knew how to commit, those of his Family that he left behind, to a Wise, and Good, and Faithful, and Covenant-keeping God. *Leave thy Fatherless Children, I will preserve them alive, and let thy Widows trust in me,* Jer. xlix 11.

But to resume his Publick Character, if we consider Mr. *Coningham* as a *Preacher* ; how well furnished was his Mind with what might both please and profit ! How serious was his Spirit, and how thoroughly affected with the Things he spoke to others ! How becoming the Pulpit was his Countenance, and how graceful his Appearance ! How grave his Deportment, and how well chosen his Words and Expressions ! And how far must all this go to recommend his Doctrine, and to persuade Men ?

If we consider him in *Prayer*, he was a very skillful Intercessor with Almighty God. His Concern for the *Publick* was upon all Occasions very discernable, and his Petitions very suitable. The *King* and his Illustrious Family had a very large Share in his most warm and affectionate Requests. He was very happy also in suiting his Prayers to the *State of Religion* in the World, and very particular in the Mention of Nations and People. The *Protestant* Interest lay near his Heart ; but he was exceedingly charitable in his Sentiments as to the differing Parties among Protestants, and many were the Requests that he us'd to offer, for more of a *Spirit of Love and Unity*. And then, in private Cases he had an un-

common Sympathy, and a Propriety of Expressions, that made his Intercessions very moving, and such as would engage even those who might think themselves least concern'd in the Cases mention'd, yet to go along with him.

If we consider him in *Conversation*, he was free and communicative; and as he had a good Stock both of Learning and Experience, his Readiness to communicate render'd him the more desireable. He was one also that lov'd to Talk of the Things of Religion; and was well vers'd both in Polemical, Casuistical, and Practical Divinity. He was one that gave abundant Proof of his *loving* our LORD JESUS CHRIST in *Sincerity*; and was mightily concern'd for the promoting a Work of Grace and Regeneration upon the Hearts of Men. He was very *merciful* and charitable as far as his Circumstances would allow, and you enabled him to be so. And he was very tender and affectionate (but yet so as to command Regard) in his more retired Counsels, Reproofs, and Admonitions.

In short, he was one that behav'd himself well both in his *own House* and in the *House of God*.

The last Time he was in publick, was to administer the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; the most solemn Work in this World, next to that of *Dying*: And now even that last and greatest Work is over with him too. You shall no more hear his Voice; no more see his Face, till you meet him before the *Tribunal of God*.

Let such then as have attended his Ministry now ask themselves, how they expect to meet him at the last Day? If any are left by him in a *State of Sin*, and should die in that State, they may be sure of his standing up to witness against them: And what will you then be able to say for your selves, when neither his affecting Way of *Preaching*, no, nor his surprizing awaken-

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awakening *Death*, could fasten any saving Convictions upon you?

But if any are brought into a *safe*, or *comfortable*, or more *improved State*, by his Ministry; let such rejoice to think of their future Happiness, when they shall meet him that is gone, in the other World; How great will their Joy be! to accompany him, when he shall say, Lord, *here I am, and those whom thou hast given me.*

Let *All* of us now set our selves to improve this Providence. Let it not be said that the *Righteous perish*, whilst *none lays it to heart*: But let us so far be affected with it, as to quicken every one of us to our Duty. Lord, shall we be *loitering*, when others are *dying*?

The *Death* of *faithful Ministers* has always been look'd upon as speaking very loudly to their respective Congregations.

O that you might know the *Voice* of this *Rebuke*, and *who has appointed it*! Really when I think how many of our Ministers in this City have died of late, my Spirits almost fail within me, for fear God should be departing from us.

Brethren, pray for *us*, that we may not be forsaken; but that a double Portion of the Spirit of them that are deceased may rest upon us that remain.

Pray for *your selves*, that God would encrease (not lessen) the Number of faithful Labourers in his Vineyard; that he would not in a judicial Way remove your Teachers into Darkness.

And pray for an *Interest* that we hope belongs to God, by taking up the Words of the *Prophet*, and saying, *O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee, by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small*, Amos vii. 5.

'Tis God alone that can make up our Breaches: And this I trust he will do, if we sincerely pray to him. This Blessing I wish for *you* in particular:

And

And in order to this, that I may now close, I wish you all that Wisdom, and Grace, and Unanimity, and all those kind Directions of Providence, that are needful to your choosing a proper Person in the Place of him that is taken from you: And I wish you a special Interest in the Care of the Great Shepherd of Souls, who lives for ever, and therefore has an unchangeable Priesthood. To whom, &c.

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